

## PSALM 118

Thanksgiving for the LORD'S Saving Goodness

### INTRODUCTION.

- A. From Roy H. Enoch (7-24-96).  
"A Hymn of Praise to God Because the Rejected Stone Has Become Head of the Corner. A Messianic Prophecy of the Son of God. A Psalm of David."
- B. Coffman rejects most present-day scholars who contend that this psalm "is a marching song sung by the pilgrims not yet arrived coming to Jerusalem to worship," or that it is a national hymn referring to the nation of Israel. It seems inappropriate that it refers to Israel or was sung by Israel, since it is so intensely personal having personal pronouns like "I," "my," or "me" 30 times in the last 25 verses.
- C. This seems most appropriate to describe David offering a sacrifice when he was made king at Saul's death. He gave thanks to God for preserving him when Saul tried to kill him. He also gives thanks for being exalted as king. Verses 22-24 are quoted in the NT and applied to Christ, as David was a type of Christ.
- D. The first four verses seem to be an introduction what may have been sung by a groups of singers describing why thanks should be given to the Lord. Verse 1 is identical with 106:1, 107:1, 136:1 and similar to 136:26.

### THE TEXT.

- 118:1** Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;  
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
- 2** Oh let Israel say,  
"His lovingkindness is everlasting."
- 3** Oh let the house of Aaron say,  
"His lovingkindness is everlasting."
- 4** Oh let those who fear the LORD say,  
"His lovingkindness is everlasting."
- 5** From *my* distress I called upon the LORD;  
The LORD answered me *and set me* in a large place.
- 6** The LORD is for me; I will not fear;  
What can man do to me?
- 7** The LORD is for me among those who help me;  
Therefore I will look *with satisfaction* on those who hate me.
- 8** It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
Than to trust in man.
- 9** It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
Than to trust in princes.
- 10** All nations surrounded me;  
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
- 11** They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me;  
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
- 12** They surrounded me like bees;  
They were extinguished as a fire of thorns;  
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
- 13** You pushed me violently so that I was falling,  
But the LORD helped me.
- 14** The LORD is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation.
- 15** The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous;  
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
- 16** The right hand of the LORD is exalted;  
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
- 17** I will not die, but live,  
And tell of the works of the LORD.
- 18** The LORD has disciplined me severely,

- But He has not given me over to death.
- 19** Open to me the gates of righteousness;  
I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD.
- 20** This is the gate of the LORD;  
The righteous will enter through it.
- 21** I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me,  
And You have become my salvation.
- 22** The stone which the builders rejected  
Has become the chief corner *stone*.
- 23** This is the LORD'S doing;  
It is marvelous in our eyes.
- 24** This is the day which the LORD has made;  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- 25** O LORD, do save, we beseech You;  
O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity!
- 26** Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;  
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.
- 27** The LORD is God, and He has given us light;  
Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.
- 28** You are my God, and I give thanks to You;  
*You are* my God, I extol You.
- 29** Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;  
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

## COMMENTS.

- A. **[v1-4]** Each of us should be able to give a list of reasons why we are thankful to the Lord. When we think of our sins, and the price of our redemption, we should always give thanks. In 115:9-11 we have the same three groups addressed: "Israel," "the house of Aaron," and "you who fear the Lord."  
"His mercy endures forever" is a common refrain of praise in several psalms. No psalm uses the expression as much as Psalms 136.
- B. **[v5]** "I called on the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me..." Many of the psalms describe how David prayed to the Lord for deliverance when Saul was trying to kill him.  
"...and set me on a broad place." It was a great blessing for a soldier to be on stable ground with room to fight. It was often described as a blessing to be on a "level place" or a "broad place" while the Lord might punish by putting one "on a slippery place" or "on a slope."  
**[v6]** "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" We should have confidence in doing what God tells us to do because He will be with us and bless us. He will also hinder and punish those who trouble us.
- C. **[v8,9]** There are many reasons why it is better to trust in the Lord than in men, and even rulers. Albert Barnes describes some of the reasons that it is better to trust in God than men:  
"It is better:
1. because man is weak,--but God is Almighty;
  2. because man is selfish,--but God is benevolent;
  3. because man is often faithless and deceitful,--God never
  4. because there are emergencies, as death, in which man cannot aid us, however faithful, kind, and friendly he may be,--but there are no circumstances in this life, and none in death where God cannot assist us;
  5. because the ability of man to help us pertains at best only to this present life,--the power of God will be commensurate with eternity." (*Psalms, Vol. III, p. 169*).
- D. **[v10-12]** "All nations surrounded me... they surrounded me like bees..." When Saul was pursuing David, the surrounding nations were also bold in attacking and harassing David and the nation of Israel. The Philistines killed Saul and the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites were opposing Israel.

**[v13]** “You PUSHED me violently, that I might fall...” Strong’s # 1760 says dachah (daw-khaw’); a primitive root; to push down: KJV-- chase, drive away (on). There is no more vivid description of this kind of danger than when Saul was throwing a spear at David trying to pin him to the wall.

**[v14]** “The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous.” There were many faithful in Israel who favored David over Saul. Many in Israel were willing to betray him like some in the church are more interested in what is popular or will give them a benefit than do what is right.

- F. **[v17]** “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.” Not only Saul was against him, but the nations around them. Today we are often surrounded by temptations and people who want to take advantage of us and lead us to sin. We must stay close to the Lord’s Word if we are going to remain faithful to the Lord.

**[v18]** “The Lord has chastened me severely...” David must have felt that God had tried him over and over with Saul trying to kill him with a spear, and chasing him with 4,000 select troops, when there were only 400 with David. An even greater test may have been the two times that David had a chance to kill Saul, but spared him because he was God’s anointed (1Sam. 24:1-15; 26:1-25).

- G. **[v19]** “Open to me the gates of righteousness...” Verses 19-20 seem to be the victorious king approaching the gates of Jerusalem and calling out to the gatekeeper to open the “gates of righteousness.” The gatekeeper answers in verse 20. Others suggest that the doors of the temple are referred to and especially the Holy of Holies. But the temple had not been built when David made his triumphant entry to Jerusalem, and especially when the ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem early in his reign. There are many things that could be thought of as gates of righteousness: it could refer to God’s Holy Presence at the tabernacle or temple; it could be the imputed righteousness of forgiveness or ethical righteousness of those who worship by doing what is right to the best of their knowledge.

**[v21]** “I will praise You, for You have answered me...” This seems far too personal to represent Israel. It seems far more reasonable that it is written by David, and later applied also to the nation.

- H. **[v22]** “The Stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” Jesus quotes this in Mt. 21:42 and applies it to Himself. Peter quoted it in Ac. 4:11 and applied it to the Jewish rulers rejecting Jesus as the Christ. Paul quotes it in Eph. 2:20 to describe how the church was “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” And the church is described as a building which “grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (2:21). Peter also used the prophecy of Ps. 118:22 in 1Pet. 2:4-8.

The words “head of the corner” are translated “cornerstone” in some of the quotations in the NT. The “head stone” was the capstone of an arch that held the building in place. The “cornerstone” was the chief stone or highest stone of a corner. Clyde M. Miller says that “The cornerstone is either the main stone in the foundation or in the arch which holds the whole structure together.” *The Living Word Commentary*, Psalms, p. 384.

**[v23,24]** “This is the Lord’s doing... this is the day that the Lord has made.” David did not take credit for his success, but gave praise to the Lord. Jesus continued to claim that He did the work of His Father in heaven. We need to learn to praise the Lord for good things that happen to us rather than take so much credit for ourselves.

**[v25]** This beautifully brief prayer seems to be a spontaneous outburst of praise when thinking of the wonderful things that the Lord had done for him.

**[v26]** This may be a response of the authorities when the king comes to their city. It was sung about Christ when he made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:9).

**[v27]** These words seem most appropriate for the priests indicating acceptance of David’s sacrifice

**[v28,29]** It seems that the king closes the ceremony with a prayer of thanksgiving, in the same way the psalm began.